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Letter dated 18 February 1993 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your urgent attention to the current escalation of repression and use of collective punishment by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The situation in the Gaza Strip, in particular, is a matter of greatest concern owing to the increasing resort to warfare tactics by Israel, the occupying Power. According to a press release by The Gaza Center for Rights and Law of 13 February 1993, and The Washington Post of 16 February 1993, a force of over 200 Israeli soldiers carried out a 13-hour military operation in the al-Arisha quarter of Khan Yunis, Gaza, on 11 February 1993, in search of fugitives and weapons. Large-calibre machine-guns, anti-tank missiles, dynamite and 40 mm shells were reportedly used in the attack, which destroyed 10 houses and heavily damaged 9 others. Almost 200 Palestinians were affected, and 18 families were rendered homeless. It should be pointed out that the homes were attacked after being searched, showing that the destruction did not serve any military purpose. While this is reported to be the largest attack of its type to date, there has been a dramatic escalation of military assaults in recent months, resulting in severe damage to the homes of 62 families since July 1992.

Recent information collected by human rights organizations also shows growing reliance on excessive force by Israeli troops against Palestinians, resulting in a rapid increase in fatalities in the past six months. According to an analysis conducted by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, the overall number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces rose from 63 to 76 between August 1992 and January 1993, a

rise of more than 20 per cent over the previous six months. Two thirds of the killings were reported to have occurred in non-life-threatening situations, as opposed to one half during the previous period; and fatalities among children were reported to have almost tripled, from 6 to 17. According to Middle East International of 5 February 1993, many of the children were either shot in the back or were the victims of carelessness by the army in situations which could have been handled by non-lethal means. In a recent incident, reported by The Christian Science Monitor of 10 February 1993, nine Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops in four days, the most violent days in more than two years.

The Palestine Human Rights Information Center, based in Jerusalem, in a press release dated 22 January 1993, reported that at least 60 fatal shootings in 1992 were carried out by Israeli undercover soldiers and should be classified as extrajudicial killings. According to eyewitness accounts, these killings typically take place without warning; victims are denied the opportunity to surrender; victims are shot even when unarmed or with hands in a position of surrender; victims are shot or beaten until dead even though they have been captured or wounded.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like once again to express alarm at the increasing repressive measures by Israel, the occupying Power, in violation of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and numerous Security Council resolutions. The Committee urgently appeals to the Security Council to take the necessary measures to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 681 (1990), until a permanent, durable and just solution is found to the question of Palestine based on relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Committee also notes with great concern that the situation of the nearly 400 Palestinian deportees remains unresolved and that they continue to suffer harsh conditions in southern Lebanon. The Committee calls once again for the full and immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 799 (1992). This would help to ensure the continuation of the peace process, preserve the prestige and credibility of the Security Council, and guarantee respect for international law and agreements by all, without exception.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 30, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSE
Chairman of the
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People